Examining purchase intention towards counterfeit luxury goods: The role of social and personality factors

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of social and personality factors on consumers' attitudes and intentions towards purchasing counterfeit luxury goods in an emerging market context. Drawing on the theory of planned behaviour, the research integrates personality factors (value consciousness, integrity, status consumption, brand consciousness, and personal gratification) and social influences (normative and informational susceptibility, and collectivism) to assess their influence on counterfeit luxury consumption. 312 respondents completed the questionnaire, and the data were analysed using SmartPLS. The findings showed that most social and personality factors did not have a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury purchases. However, collectivism, personal gratification, and brand consciousness influenced attitudes negatively. This suggests that consumers who value their social group's opinions, value a sense of satisfaction, and are conscious of the brands they purchase, form negative attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods. Within the theory of planned behaviour framework, attitude emerged as the sole significant predictor of purchase intention, thereby confirming its pivotal mediating role in consumer decision-making processes. These findings contradict established theoretical assumptions regarding the influence of peer pressure and status considerations in counterfeit consumption behaviour. The results underscore the multifaceted nature of consumer ethics and identity formation within emerging market contexts, revealing complexities that warrant further theoretical refinement and empirical investigation.

Keywords: counterfeit luxury goods, consumer attitudes, social factors, personality factors, purchase intention

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the sales of counterfeit luxury goods are increasing, which presents economic and ethical challenges for authentic luxury brands (Cesareo, Pastore & Williams 2017). While it is challenging to pinpoint the exact value of the counterfeit market, it is estimated that the global market is worth over US$1.7 trillion (Ferere 2025). The counterfeit market expands across all industries, though the most counterfeited brands are considered to be luxury brands (Richter 2019). This is primarily driven by consumers' strong desire to purchase luxury goods for the prestige, without paying the high price (Liu, Wakeman & Norton 2024). *Counterfeit luxury goods* are typically defined as illegally produced replicas of authentic branded products, usually of inferior quality, passed off as authentic (Brandão & Gadekar 2019). Emerging markets in regions like Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia have witnessed particularly high demand for counterfeit luxuries, driven by consumers with aspirational consumption patterns and sometimes limited access to affordable genuine luxury goods (Kasber, El-Bassiouny & Hamed 2023; Ndereyimana *et al.* 2022).

Although the growth of counterfeit luxury goods is increasing, there is a limited understanding of the way in which social and personality factors influence attitudes towards intending to purchase counterfeit luxury goods. Existing research has focused on social motivations (Wilcox, Kim & Sen 2009), egalitarian value (Liu *et al.* 2024), demand and purchase behaviour (Cant, Wiid & Manley 2014), moral reasoning (Chen, Teng & Liao 2018), and purchase intention (Koay 2018). An overarching finding across various studies relates to the role that social and personality factors play in influencing consumer attitudes (Budiman, 2021; Khan, Fazili & Bashir, 2021), offering a comprehensive understanding of how attitudes are formed (Ndereyimana *et al.*, 2022).

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) offers a comprehensive approach to understanding consumer behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB has been used in several consumer behaviour contexts as well as counterfeiting, confirming its applicability within this context (Kasber *et al.*, 2023; Quoquab *et al.*, 2017). According to the TPB, a favourable attitude toward enhances behavioural intentions and ultimately behaviour, and negative attitudes decrease the likelihood of engaging in particular behaviour. The study contributes to the literature by testing how social and personality factors influence attitude, extending the understanding of the attitude to purchase intention relationship. In addition, the study centres on South Africa as an emerging market where significant demand for counterfeit luxury goods has been observed (Irwin 2024). It also offers insights for luxury brand managers and policymakers on how to curb the demand for counterfeits by targeting the identified drivers with the aim of ensuring that social and personality factors are negatively shaped to form negative attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods and decrease the purchase intention. The next section of the paper focuses on the literature review, which supports the purpose of the study. This is followed by the hypotheses developed for the study, and an explanation of the research approach. Thereafter, the results and recommendations are presented, including suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS COUNTERFEIT LUXURY GOODS

Attitude, conceptualised as a learnt predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably towards a given object, remains a central construct in understanding consumer behaviour (Ajzen 1991). It serves as a critical determinant of behavioural intention and, ultimately, purchase decision-making. As such, comprehending consumers' evaluative orientation towards a product (i.e., their attitude) is essential in predicting the likelihood of purchase (Babamiri *et al.* 2020). This is particularly important because attitude acts as a cognitive-affective filter through which consumers

assess the desirability and acceptability of engaging in a specific consumption behaviour (De Houwer, Gawronski & Barnes-Holmes 2013). When consumers have favourable or positive attitudes towards a product, it increases the likelihood of making the purchase, which in turn makes understanding attitudes important for marketers (Babamiri *et al.* 2020). Given that counterfeit luxury goods are illegal to purchase, the attitude becomes more complicated. Factors like affordability (Rahiminia & Arian, 2021) and social acceptance may enhance the positive attitudes towards counterfeits – these could be considered social influences (Khan, Fazili & Bashir 2022). However, the illegal nature introduces moral and legal considerations that may serve as negative influences towards attitudes and act as deterrents which could be considered as personality-driven factors (Eisend, Hartmann & Apaolaza 2017).

2.2 SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER ATTITUDES

According to Phau and Teah (2009), social factors refer to the influence exerted by others on an individual's behaviour and decision-making processes. These factors play an important role in influencing consumers' attitudes as consumers typically rely on their social group's norms as a benchmark to guide their behaviour (Haslam *et al.* 2018). When purchasing luxury goods, consumers often seek validation from their social groups, and products that are status-oriented are used to signal wealth (Khan *et al.* 2022; Ting, Goh & Isa 2016). This is evident within collectivistic cultures where social expectations often drive behaviour (Kasber *et al.* 2023).

Social norms have been previously identified as an antecedent towards attitudes within the counterfeit consumption context (Ang *et al.* 2001; Ndereyimana *et al.* 2022). A consumer's social group drives behaviour as consumers seek acceptance and approval and within a counterfeit luxury goods context, if the social group is positive towards counterfeit goods, consumers may be more willing to purchase them. For instance, in a study conducted by Ndereyimana *et al.* (2022) in Rwanda, consumers perceived counterfeit goods as socially acceptable and were more likely to form favourable attitudes and intentions towards counterfeits. Similarly, in their Egyptian study, Kasber *et al.* (2023) found that social norms were the strongest predictors of counterfeit purchase intention. As both studies were conducted in an emerging market context, they show the importance of the social group's considerations. This study focuses on three aspects that make up social factors: normative susceptibility, informational susceptibility, and collectivism. These are discussed in the subsections that follow.

2.2.1 Normative Susceptibility

When consumers are influenced by their social group's expectations, they will often act in ways that maintain the social group's approval or avoid disapproval, which relates to normative susceptibility (Kasuma *et al.* 2020). Some consumers are influenced significantly enough that they choose to purchase counterfeits in order to meet the social group's expectations in an effort to enhance their status (Kim & Karpova, 2010).

Typically, consumers who are considered susceptible to their social group's norms mirror their behaviour in purchasing products that are considered accepted by their social group (Adiprima, Indraswari & Kasri 2020). Within a counterfeit luxury context, Ang *et al.* (2001) added that consumers who seek social acceptance purchase counterfeit luxury to attain the acceptance they desire. This is confirmed in Ndereyimana *et al.*'s (2022) study, where the positive attitude towards counterfeit luxury was driven by the need for social approval. Kasber *et al.* (2023) added that this was regardless of ethical considerations, where consumers simply desire to attain social acceptance regardless of the ethical costs.

2.2.2 Informational Susceptibility

When a consumer relies on friends, family, or aspirational figures as a source of information, they are considered susceptible to that information and recommendations (Hidayat & Diwasasri, 2013; Phau & Teah, 2009). If consumers are not familiar with the product category, this reliance increases, and the information obtained becomes a guiding source in assisting with making the product decision (Ting *et al.* 2016). Within the counterfeit luxury context, the information received can shape the consumer's perception of risk and opinion of which counterfeit luxury goods are recommended based on others' experiences (Moon *et al.* 2018). Word of mouth shared reduces uncertainty, decreases the perception of risk, and assists in forming positive attitudes towards counterfeit goods (Kasuma *et al.* 2020). According to Kim *et al.* (2024), word of mouth shared by peers increased consumers' willingness to purchase counterfeits in China. Moreover, they noted that even face-conscious consumers (i.e., those worried about reputational damage) became more open to counterfeit purchases when trusted peers endorsed such behaviour. In this sense, informational susceptibility acts not just as a passive influence, but can also actively reduce social and functional risks.

2.2.3 Collectivism

Collectivism is a cultural orientation in which individuals prioritise their social group's needs and values over personal autonomy or self-differentiation (Tang, Tian & Zaichkowsky 2014; Triandis 1995). In collectivist societies, prevalent across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, consumers often assess consumption decisions through the lens of group harmony and acceptance (Martinez & Jaeger 2016). Within these contexts, consumption becomes a collective practice: what one purchases is often influenced by what is socially endorsed or expected. Kim and Yoon (2021) observed that in collectivist cultures, aligning with group consumption norms fosters social inclusion, while deviation may risk exclusion. For financially constrained consumers who aspire to luxury but cannot afford genuine goods, counterfeit products are a socially legitimate means of status signalling. Therefore, the degree of collectivism can play a significant role in the consumer's attitude towards counterfeit luxury goods.

2.3 PERSONALITY FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER ATTITUDES

Personality relates to the psychological traits that influence how a consumer perceives the world and interacts with the world (Kasuma *et al.* 2020; Larsen & Buss 2005). A consumer's personality is important as it can shape their preferences, motivations, and ethical perceptions, especially in decisions that are ethically ambiguous or involve illegal products like counterfeit luxury goods. As luxury products represent the consumer's social standing, individual-level personality factors, such as brand consciousness, status consumption, value consciousness, integrity, and personal gratification, shape consumer attitudes and behaviours towards counterfeit consumption (Khan *et al.* 2022; Phau & Teah 2009; Ting *et al.* 2016). These are discussed next.

2.3.1 Brand Consciousness

Brand consciousness focuses on the consumers' drive to value brand names as symbols of quality, taste, and social standing (De Silva *et al.* 2020). The consumer's level of brand consciousness is significant within the luxury context as it serves as a visual cue of affluence and status. However, the role of brand consciousness in counterfeit consumption is context dependent. Some studies have shown that consumers who are more brand-conscious are more likely to reject counterfeit luxury due to concerns about authenticity and potential dilution of prestige (Bian & Veloutsou, 2007; Tunçel, 2022). However, other research has found that when consumers are under financial pressure, they embrace counterfeits as affordable status symbols, especially when the counterfeits closely resemble the originals in appearance and branding (Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Wang *et al.*, 2017). Al-Balushi, Alam, and Fadlalla (2024) found

that brand consciousness influenced favourable attitudes towards counterfeit goods in order to meet social expectations and signal brand affiliation.

2.3.2 Status Consumption

Often, consumers use products to communicate their social standing, which is referred to as status consumption (Pino *et al.* 2019). Within a luxury context, consumers often purchase luxury goods so that they can be displayed conspicuously and attain social recognition. This is prominent in emerging markets where consumers are status-conscious and use luxury as a status symbol. However, although luxury offers a status symbol, most consumers cannot afford the authentic version, which, according to Shahid and Paul (2021), prompts them to purchase counterfeits to maintain social acceptance. This is confirmed by Moon *et al.*'s (2018) study, where consumers who were status-conscious formed favourable attitudes towards counterfeits and used the counterfeit goods to enhance their status.

2.3.3 Value Consciousness

Value-conscious consumers seek to maximise the benefits they receive compared to the cost they have had to pay for the product. Often, to maximise the perceived benefits, consumers are willing to trade off the product's quality for lower prices (Ting *et al.* 2016). Counterfeit luxury products are often appealing due to their perceived value in being more economically affordable, especially when the counterfeit is like the authentic product. In a study conducted by Ang *et al.* (2001) it was found that when consumers seek value, they are more likely to purchase counterfeit goods. Likewise, Ndereyimana *et al.* (2022) found that in Rwanda, value consciousness positively influenced purchase intention for counterfeits and mediated the effect of attitude on intention. Thus, consumers consider counterfeit luxury goods as value-driven purchases, and their ethical resistance seems to decrease within this context (Quoquab *et al.*, 2017).

2.3.4 Integrity

Integrity refers to consumers' commitment to moral standards, legality, and personal ethical principles. It plays a critical role in deterring participation in ethically dubious behaviour, including the consumption of counterfeit goods (Samaddar, Mondal & Gandhi 2024). Consumers with high integrity are more likely to internalise counterfeiting as dishonest, illegal, or socially harmful. Research by Jiang *et al.* (2019) and Teah, Phau and Huang (2015) confirms a negative association between integrity and favourable attitudes towards counterfeiting. Similarly, Quoquab *et al.* (2017) showed that ethical orientation (including religiosity and legal concern) significantly reduces counterfeit purchase intentions. In an Islamic market context, Kasber *et al.* (2023) found that religiosity and moral awareness had a strong deterrent effect on counterfeit acceptance. Conversely, H. Kim and Karpova (2010) and Ting *et al.* (2016) reported inconsistent or weak effects, suggesting that consumers justify counterfeit consumption (e.g., 'no one gets hurt', 'brands are overpriced'). Tunçel (2022) added cultural nuance, finding that idealism (moral principle-based decision-making) significantly decreases counterfeit purchase intentions across Turkish and Slovenian consumers.

2.3.5 Personal Gratification

Personal gratification involves the pursuit of inner fulfilment, social recognition, or self-esteem through consumption (Kent 2018). Luxury products often symbolise success and achievement, making them attractive for consumers driven by this need. However, the relationship between gratification and counterfeit consumption is complex. Phau and Teah (2009) argued that consumers who seek internal satisfaction from ownership (i.e., who derive self-worth from genuine accomplishments) are less likely to purchase counterfeits, as doing so would undermine their sense of authenticity.

Scotto, McDonald and Weiss (2021) echoed this, suggesting that consumers who view luxury ownership as a source of authentic personal success tend to reject counterfeits. However, Basu, Basu and Lee (2015) indicated that when gratification is more externally driven (centred on recognition by others), counterfeits may still serve consumers' goals, especially if the counterfeit is indistinguishable to the social group.

3. PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESES

The overarching purpose of this research is to determine the role that social and personality factors play in consumers' attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods and examine how those attitudes influence their intention to purchase counterfeit luxury goods. Therefore, the study's objectives are:

- To determine the role that social factors (normative and informative susceptibility, and collectivism) have in forming attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods;
- To determine the role that personality factors (status consumption, brand consciousness, value consciousness, integrity, and personal gratification) have in forming attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods; and
- To examine the influence of attitude towards the intention to purchase counterfeit luxury goods.

Based on the literature presented above and the research objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_1: Normative susceptibility has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods.

H_2: Informative susceptibility has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods.

H_3: Collectivism has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods.

H_4: Status consumption has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods.

H_5: Brand consciousness has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods.

H_6: Value consciousness has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods.

H_7: Integrity has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods.

H_8: Personal gratification has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods.

H_9: Attitude has a significant influence on the intention to purchase counterfeit luxury goods.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed a quantitative, survey-based research design. An online self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from South African consumers aged 18–65 who had purchased or had the intention to purchase counterfeit luxury goods in the past six months. A non-probability convenience sampling approach was used to invite respondents to participate in the study. The link to the self-administered questionnaire was shared via social media

platforms (Facebook and Instagram) and respondents were invited to complete the questionnaire. Within the questionnaire, respondents were introduced to the study, where its purpose was explained and the respondents' rights were clearly outlined. To complete the questionnaire, the respondents had to provide consent to participate, as required by the ethics committee, which approved the data collection (ethical clearance number: 2020SCiiS013)

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section gathered respondents' demographic information (i.e., age, gender, highest level of education, and employment status), while the second section collected responses relating to the constructs included in the study. This section was designed using a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 indicated 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicated 'strongly agree'. All construct items were adapted from previous studies to ensure validity: normative and informative susceptibility were adapted from Bearden, Netemeyer and Teel (1989); collectivism from Faqih and Jaradat (2014); status consumption from Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn (1999); brand consciousness from Sprotles and Kendall (1986); value consciousness from Lichtenstein, Netemeyer and Burton (1990); integrity from Vitell and Muncy (1992); and personal gratification, attitudes, and purchase intentions from Teah *et al.* (2015). A total of 312 responses were received.

The data were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4. PLS-SEM was appropriate given the study's focus on predicting the purchase intention. Furthermore, PLS-SEM allowed for the simultaneous estimation of the measurement and structural models and provided a comprehensive assessment of the model and its hypotheses.

According to Hair *et al.* (2017), the measurement model allows for the assessment of internal reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. More specifically, Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR) were used to assess internal reliability where the acceptable thresholds were 0.70 or greater (Hair *et al.*, 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Convergent validity was evaluated through the average variance extracted (AVE), with values exceeding the minimum recommended threshold of 0.50 indicating that constructs explain at least 50% of the variance in their indicators (Fornell & Larcker 1981). The Fornell-Larcker criterion was used to examine discriminant validity, which requires that a construct's AVE square root be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was used as a more rigorous assessment, with values below 0.85 deemed acceptable (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt 2015). Lastly, the factor loadings were examined with values of 0.70 or higher considered as ideal, with lower factor loadings being deemed appropriate if the construct's AVE and CR were adequate (Hair *et al.* 2019). As the measures were within the parameters, the measurement model was deemed appropriate and the structural model was analysed to assess the hypotheses.

5. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the reliability and validity results. As mentioned, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) and CR. All constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair *et al.* 2017), indicating reliability across all constructs. Convergent validity, assessed through AVE values, was above 0.50, confirming that the constructs were valid (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All factor loadings were greater than 0.70, with a few acceptable values in the 0.60 – 0.70 range (Hair *et al.* 2019), supporting indicator reliability. To ensure discriminant validity, two methods were used. First, the Fornell-Larcker criterion showed that for each construct, the square root of the AVE was greater than its highest correlation with any other construct, indicating adequate separation. Second, the HTMT ratio was assessed, with all HTMT values falling below the conservative cut-off of 0.85 (Henseler *et al.* 2015), providing additional evidence of discriminant validity, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1: RELIABILITY (CRONBACH'S ALPHA AND CR) AND CONVERGENT VALIDITY (AVE) OF EACH CONSTRUCT AND ITS CORRESPONDING ITEMS

Construct and items	Factor loadings	α	CR	AVE
Normative susceptibility				
It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.	0.796	0.916	0.925	0.655
When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	0.893			
If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.	0.893			
I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.	0.854			
I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.	0.910			
I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.	0.851			
Informative susceptibility				
To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.	0.947	0.756	0.819	0.608
I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class.	0.711			
I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy.	0.650			
Collectivism				
Individual rewards are not as important as overall group welfare.	0.819	0.839	0.854	0.555
Group success is more important than individual success.	0.903			
Being accepted as a member of a group is more important to me than being autonomous and independent from others.	0.760			
Being loyal to a group is more important than individual gain.	0.768			
Value consciousness				
I am concerned about price and product quality.	0.637	0.793	0.853	0.595
I compare prices for the best value for money.	0.791			
I like to be sure that I get my money's worth.	0.784			
I try to maximise the quality for the money spent.	0.857			
Integrity				
I value honesty.	0.746	0.816	0.879	0.645
I value politeness.	0.877			
I value responsibility.	0.793			
I value self-control.	0.792			
Personal gratification				
An exciting life is important to me.	0.760	0.708	0.810	0.526
I value pleasure.	0.844			
I value social recognition	0.771			
Status consumption				
I would buy a product just because it has status.	0.748	0.879	0.885	0.662
I am interested in new products with status.	0.929			
I would pay more for a product if it had status.	0.633			
A product is more valuable to me if it has some snob appeal.	0.909			
Brand consciousness				
Brand names tell me something about the quality of the counterfeit luxury items.	0.893	0.834	0.887	0.667
Brand names tell me something about how 'cool' counterfeit luxury item is.	0.863			
Sometimes I am willing to pay more money for the counterfeit luxury items because of its brand name.	0.842			
Brand name counterfeit luxury items that cost a lot of money are of good quality.	0.644			
Attitude				
Buying counterfeits of luxury brands infringes intellectual property.	0.874	0.871	0.921	0.795
Buying counterfeits of luxury brands damages interests and rights of legitimate/original manufacturers.	0.924			
Buying counterfeits of luxury brands will hurt the luxury goods industry.	0.877			
Purchase intention				
I knowingly look for counterfeits of luxury brands.	0.873	0.774	0.869	0.692
I always buy counterfeits of luxury brands.	0.925			
On request, I will consider purchasing counterfeits of luxury brands for a friend.	0.925			
I will buy counterfeits of luxury brands.	0.678			

TABLE 2: DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY USING THE HTMT METHOD

	ATT	BC	COLL	INS	I	NOS	PEG	PI	SC	VCO
ATT										
BC	0.410									
COLL	0.278	0.378								
INS	0.218	0.669	0.236							
I	0.160	0.121	0.131	0.188						
NOS	0.361	0.739	0.212	0.725	0.089					
PEG	0.437	0.655	0.339	0.588	0.328	0.726				
PI	0.268	0.497	0.194	0.387	0.101	0.382	0.291			
SC	0.219	0.691	0.302	0.577	0.092	0.729	0.537	0.475		
VCO	0.168	0.267	0.094	0.320	0.619	0.216	0.325	0.178	0.116	

Notes: ATT = attitude; BC = brand consciousness; COLL = collectivism; INS = informative susceptibility; I = integrity; NOS = normative susceptibility; PEG = personal gratification; PI = purchase intention; SC = status consumption; VCO = value consciousness

The structural model was assessed to test the hypothesised relationships as presented in section 3. As shown in Table 3, while the core TPB relationship (H_9) was confirmed, showing that a favourable attitude significantly increased the intention to purchase counterfeit luxury goods ($\beta = 0.224$, $t = 3.890$, $p < 0.001$), many of the antecedents to attitude did not produce the expected effects. Both normative susceptibility (H_1) and informational susceptibility (H_2) had statistically insignificant effects on attitudes towards counterfeit consumption, with $\beta = -0.155$ ($p = 0.118$) and $\beta = 0.106$ ($p = 0.132$) respectively. Collectivism (H_3) had a significant impact, but in the opposite direction of the hypothesis – it negatively influenced attitudes ($\beta = -0.173$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that stronger collectivist tendencies may discourage counterfeit acceptance in this context. Similarly, status consumption (H_4) did not significantly shape attitudes ($\beta = 0.032$, $p = 0.700$). Interestingly, brand consciousness (H_5) was significantly and negatively related to attitude ($\beta = -0.216$, $p = 0.006$), suggesting that brand-orientated consumers tend to reject counterfeit goods, likely due to their emphasis on authenticity. Value consciousness (H_6) also failed to show a significant relationship with attitude ($\beta = -0.019$, $p = 0.754$). Integrity (H_7) exhibited an insignificant effect on attitude ($\beta = 0.096$, $p = 0.068$), while personal gratification (H_8) significantly and negatively affected attitude ($\beta = -0.163$, $p = 0.019$), indicating that consumers who value personal achievement may perceive counterfeit purchases as inconsistent with their self-image.

TABLE 3: RESULTS OF THE HYPOTHESES TESTING

Path	*β*	*t*-value	*p*-value	Decision
H_1: Normative susceptibility → attitude	-0.155	1.564	0.118	Rejected
H_2: Informative susceptibility → attitude	0.106	1.505	0.132	Rejected
H_3: Collectivism → attitude	-0.173	3.426	0.001	Supported
H_4: Status consumption → attitude	0.032	0.386	0.700	Rejected
H_5: Brand consciousness → attitude	-0.216	2.748	0.006	Supported
H_6: Value consciousness → attitude	-0.019	0.313	0.754	Rejected
H_7: Integrity → attitude	0.096	1.827	0.068	Rejected
H_8: Personal gratification → attitude	-0.163	2.349	0.019	Supported
H_9: Attitude → purchase intention	0.224	3.890	0.000	Supported

6. DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This study offers important theoretical and practical insights into counterfeit luxury consumption in emerging market contexts. Contrary to some expectations, not all social and personality factors influenced attitudes towards counterfeit products. Of the nine hypotheses tested, only two predictors – brand consciousness and personal gratification – had statistically significant relationships with attitudes, and both were negative in direction. Additionally, attitude was a significant and positive predictor of purchase intention, confirming a core component of the TPB (Ajzen 1991). Theoretically, this study challenges some commonly held assumptions in the literature. For example, normative and informational susceptibility, typically found to be strong predictors of counterfeit attitudes in collectivist or peer-influenced contexts (Ang *et al.* 2001; Ndereyimana *et al.* 2022), were statistically insignificant in this study. This finding suggests that the social group does not significantly influence the attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods in this context, which could also explain why collectivism was also found to have a significant yet negative effect on attitudes. This suggests that social groups within South Africa may discourage counterfeit consumption or the consumer may be reluctant to be identified as an individual who owns counterfeit luxury goods. The results of this study differ from those conducted in South and East Asia, where the social influence was a significant driver towards counterfeit consumption (e.g., Kasber *et al.* 2023; Khan *et al.* 2022; Kim *et al.* 2024).

The study found a negative relationship between brand consciousness and attitudes, which suggests that consumers who are conscious of the brands they purchase would avoid counterfeits (Al-Balushi *et al.* 2024; Bian & Veloutsou 2007), perhaps as they seek authentic luxury brands that communicate their status. Personal gratification also negatively predicted attitudes, implying that consumers who seek achievement and recognition may view counterfeit products as inconsistent with their self-image or goals (Phau & Teah 2009). Other predictors, such as status consumption, value consciousness, and integrity, were statistically insignificant, indicating that aspirational, pragmatic, or ethical considerations may not meaningfully differentiate consumer attitudes in this context. The confirmation of attitude as a significant predictor of purchase intention aligns with the TPB (Ajzen 1991) and reinforces its applicability to ethical consumption decisions.

For luxury brand managers, the insights signal that targeting brand-loyal consumers may be a productive path in reducing counterfeit demand. Since brand-conscious individuals are less favourable towards counterfeits, campaigns that emphasise the prestige, heritage, and exclusivity of authentic luxury goods could further polarise them against imitations. Additionally, emphasising personal gratification through authenticity – for example, the pride of owning a real product – may appeal to consumers who are currently deterred by the lack of symbolic value in counterfeits. Given the non-significant role of social factors in this study, marketers may need to reconsider normative appeals (e.g., peer pressure or ‘everyone is doing it’ messages). Instead, messaging strategies might focus on individual-level motivations, such as self-expression, pride, and authenticity, rather than social compliance. Luxury brands may also benefit from offering accessible entry points to ownership. By introducing lower-cost authentic items (e.g., accessories, limited editions), financing options, or certified pre-owned marketplaces, brands can engage aspirational consumers who are otherwise priced out and thus vulnerable to the counterfeit market.

Based on this study’s findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Highlight authenticity as status: Authentic luxury goods communicate status, craftsmanship, and heritage. As counterfeit luxury goods diminish this, authentic luxury brands should focus on the benefits of owning an authentic luxury product and promote the link between authenticity and status in their communication.

2. Engage brand-conscious consumers: Consumers who are brand-conscious are more likely to purchase authentic luxury brands, as they do not want to risk owning counterfeits. Therefore, authentic luxury brands should offer exclusive incentives to encourage the consumer's behaviour.

3. Devalue counterfeits through education: As mentioned, luxury goods communicate prestige, therefore, authentic luxury brands should focus on communicating how consumers could identify counterfeits, their inferior quality and the potential diminished status.

4. Appeal to personal ethics and accomplishment: Authentic luxury brands could frame counterfeit rejection as a sign of integrity and success, communicating the personal gratification that consumers could attain when purchasing the authentic version.

5. Reduce counterfeit access: Authentic luxury brands should aim to increase the social cost linked to purchasing counterfeit goods by highlighting the risk to the consumer's reputation.

This study set out to investigate the social and personality factors influencing counterfeit luxury consumption in an emerging market context. The model incorporated key social influence factors (normative and informational susceptibility, and collectivism), identity-related traits (status consumption, brand consciousness, and personal gratification), value orientations (value consciousness), and ethics (integrity) to predict attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods, which were hypothesised to predict purchase intention.

The findings offer expected and surprising insights. While attitude significantly and positively influenced purchase intention, only brand consciousness and personal gratification significantly influenced attitude, and both negatively. Notably, normative susceptibility, informational susceptibility, status consumption, and value consciousness – factors commonly reported as positive drivers in prior research – were found to be statistically insignificant in this context. Even more unexpectedly, collectivism had a negative and significant effect on attitude, contrary to typical findings in collectivist cultures. These outcomes suggest that motivations for counterfeit luxury consumption are highly context-dependent and may evolve as consumer values shift.

Although the study offers unique insights, there are several limitations. The data were collected from a single emerging market, which may limit generalisability to other contexts. The study did not include variables, such as perceived risk, face-saving concerns, and consumer knowledge of counterfeits, which have shown relevance in other studies and might moderate the influence of the predictors tested in this study. Accordingly, future studies could conduct the research in different emerging and developed markets to explore cultural, economic, and regulatory differences in counterfeit consumption behaviour. Additionally, specific consumer segments could be explored to determine whether different consumers form different attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods. The role of social media and its influence on both social and personality factors, given its importance in shaping consumer perception, could also be explored within the context of social factors.

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